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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000541

SIPDIS

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ROME PLEASE PASS TO FODAG

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: WFP CONTINUES TO EXPAND DISTRIBUTIONS IN
FEBRUARY 2003

SUMMARY

1. During February 2003, the World Food Programme (WFP) distributed 54,567 metric tons (MT) of food commodities in Zimbabwe, increasing by over 10,000 MT distribution totals from January 2003. The distribution reached 4.285 million beneficiaries in 49 targeted districts. In March 2003, WFP plans to target 4.7 million beneficiaries with 59,262 MT of food commodities. Including other pipeline sources, notably USAID's C-SAFE (Consortium for the Southern Africa Food Security Emergency) pipeline covering 7 additional districts, a total of 5.529 million beneficiaries in rural and communal areas are expected to be reached in March. WFP reports that it will have sufficient food commodities to meet cereal distribution requirements through the end of April 2003. Adequate supplies of pulses and oil still need to be confirmed for this period. Due to adequate existing milling arrangements, it is increasingly unlikely that WFP will need to mill US-donated maize in Harare or Gweru at this stage. The United States remains the largest single donor to the WFP emergency operation in Zimbabwe. END SUMMARY.

WFP EXPANDS DISTRIBUTION QUANTITY IN FEBRUARY

2. During February 2003, WFP and its implementing partners (IPs) distributed a total of 54,567 MT of food commodities to 4.285 million beneficiaries in 49 of 49 targeted districts in Zimbabwe. The February distribution was WFP's largest to date, over 10,000 MT more than January's 42,428 MT. The current distribution was also able to reach over 1 million more beneficiaries than the January distribution. The total tonnage distributed during February consisted of 42,961 MT of maize, 4,347 MT of pulses, 2,536 MT of vegetable oil, and 4,723 MT of corn-soy blend (CSB).

3. NOTE: According to the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee's December Report, there are 5.9 million rural Zimbabweans in need of food assistance. WFP has assumed responsibility for covering food aid needs in 49 of Zimbabwe's 57 rural districts. The total population in need in these 49 districts is estimated to be 5.1 million people. Of the remaining eight districts, seven are covered by the USAID-funded C-SAFE, and one is covered by Save the Children-United Kingdom. The total population in need in these eight "bilateral" districts is roughly 0.8 million. END NOTE.

BENEFICIARY TARGETS AND PROJECTIONS

4. In January, WFP projected that its February distributions would be 53,500 MT and 4.25 million beneficiaries. WFP surpassed the projection in terms of tonnage delivered and essentially met the targeted number of beneficiaries for the month of February.

5. For March 2003, WFP plans to target roughly 93 percent of the total rural population in need, that is, 4.7 million beneficiaries of the estimated 5.1 million. A total of 59,262 MT of

food commodities is projected to be distributed in all 49 of WFP's targeted districts. Comment: When combined with the C-SAFE pipeline which is distributing food to nearly 700,000 beneficiaries in 7 districts for a total of over 5.5 million people, the international food assistance effort has become immense. Although post is still unable to get accurate data on GOZ food imports and distributions, it seems clear that international food now dwarfs other sources of food, particularly GOZ food, and can no longer be characterized as targeted food assistance. End Comment.

FOOD PIPELINE STRONG THROUGH END OF APRIL

16. At WFP's current ration of 10 kilograms (kg) of cereals, 1.0 kg. of pulses/beans and 0.6 kg. vegetable oil per person per month (pppm), it projects that it will have sufficient cereal supplies to provide a full ration to all of its targeted beneficiaries through the end of April

17. Full rations for pulses and oil up to the end of April 2003 still need to be confirmed. By the end of March, WFP expects to stop general distribution of dry CSB rations, in favor of targeted supplementary feeding in all districts for selected vulnerable groups. WFP is currently identifying additional partner organizations to implement the supplementary feeding program.

17. WFP's current Emergency Operation (EMOP) 10200.0 is scheduled to be completed at the end of March 2003. The EMOP will be extended by three months, until the end of June 2003. In May, in expectation of the maize harvest, WFP projects that it will cut its beneficiary population from the current high of 5.0 million beneficiaries. The extent of the cuts will depend on crop assessments for the upcoming harvest, expected to be completed by the end of March, and other factors described below. WFP will likely require additional pledges of cereals, pulses, and CSB to meet beneficiary requirements through the end of June. These actual needs will be better clarified once the crop assessments are completed, beneficiary numbers are readjusted, as necessary, and other donor contributions are confirmed. Based on current rough estimates, WFP projects a shortfall of some 50,000 MT of cereals, 15,000 MT of pulses, and 20,000 MT CSB through the end of June 2003.

HUMANITARIAN BRIDGE TO OPEN AT BEITBRIDGE

18. WFP has reached agreement with the Government of South Africa and the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) to reopen the old bridge over the Limpopo River at the Beitbridge/Messina border crossing. The bridge will be used for humanitarian purposes only, and is expected to greatly reduce the time required for humanitarian assistance to transit the border. The bridge is still undergoing rehabilitation, and is expected to open in late March (2003).

19. WFP has deployed a full-time expatriate logistics officer to work at the Beitbridge border crossing. The logistics officer reports good cooperation with GOZ authorities and that average commercial crossing time has been reduced to ten hours from three days during December. Bottlenecks at the border crossing that appeared in early March have now been resolved, and the transit of commodities has been significantly facilitated.

HARARE MILL UNLIKELY TO OPEN

10. Due to concerns about US-donated biotech maize, the GOZ continues to require WFP to mill all GM maize prior to distribution. WFP is currently milling approximately 12,000 MT of US maize per month in Bulawayo, and 8,000 MT per month in South Africa. Because of adequate current capacity in Bulawayo and South Africa at this stage, remaining stocks of maize are not expected to necessitate the use of additional milling sites in Harare or Gweru.

CURRENT RESOURCES

11. The Zimbabwe portion of WFP's EMOP 10200.0 for Southern Africa has been 83 percent resourced. As of March 10, WFP had received commitments of 375,759 MT of food commodities. The total appeal under EMOP 10200.0 was for 452,955 MT. If WFP receives new commitments equal to the 77,196 MT shortfall, WFP reports that it will have sufficient commodities to meet beneficiary requirements through the end of June 2003. The United States remains the largest single donor, pledging 136,873 MT, valued at about \$67 million, towards EMOP 10200.0, or about 36% of total donor pledges to date. Since February 2002, the United States has committed a total of 165,493 MT of food commodities to WFP's two EMOPs 10200.0 and 10140.0, valued at more than \$82 million.

12. WFP has accepted a pledge of 100,000 MT of maize from South Africa for the current food security crisis in Southern Africa. WFP expects that approximately 64,000 MT of this maize will be designated for Zimbabwe. South Africa, however, is not able to provide the necessary funding to transport the commodities to Zimbabwe or deliver them to the final delivery points. DFID (Department for International Development)-UK and the Norwegian Government have pledged to cover a significant portion of these transport costs, and other donors are being sought to cover the remaining gap. SULLIVAN